

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Poems by David P. Berenberg, Rolfe Humphries,
Glenn Ward Dresbach, Mildred Plew Merryman,
Louise Townsend Nicholl, Marjorie Meeker,
Joseph Auslander and Others -----

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Contents

	Page
POEMS	
Desert Legend. By Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	3
Empty Corral. By Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	4
Sea Shells. By Annice Calland.....	4
Echoes. By David P. Berenberg.....	5
Mountain Road. By Belle Turnbull.....	6
Jewelry. By Annie Higgins.....	6
My Hands. By Annie Higgins.....	6
Midnight. By Annie Higgins.....	7
So Fair a Sorrow. By Anna Karfunkle.....	7
Song. By Allan Davis.....	8
Termination. By Howard McKinley Corning.....	8
Sentimental History. By Marjorie Meeker.....	9
Only the Bright Derision. By Marjorie Meeker.....	9
Mistress Death. By Rolfe Humphries.....	10
Eloi, Eloi. By Rolfe Humphries.....	10
Sonnet. By Lindley Williams Hubbell.....	11
Initiate. By Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	12
Ghoul. By Joseph Auslander.....	13
Gypsy. By Vernon Patterson.....	14
To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon. By Mildred Plew Merryman	14
INDEX	
Numbers 25-26.....	15
GUARANTORS	
Guarantors of The Measure.....	19

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Desert Legend

WHERE tawny cliffs sprawl with their rippled manes
Of golden haze, a river creeps below
As if to hide in shadows that they throw
And steal past them into the desert plains.
But in the channel, parched for lack of rains,
A yawning cavern-mouth is raised, and low
Sounds of an endless purr come while the flow
Of snow-born water cools the throat that drains.

Go close to it and purring turns to thunder
And monstrous teeth of stone drip silver foam
And waters fade in shadows, whirling faster,
But it is told a captive chief plunged under
From foes and swam to daylight and came home
And prayed for drouth that brought his foes disaster.

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Empty Corral

THE ground, once trodden, no more shows
The print of hoofs—a slow wind blows.

The willow posts, with dark wire bound,
Grow boughs—a spring creeps underground.

But swings and sags with its own heft
The gate, the loneliest thing that's left.

Slow shadows move across the place—
The clouds are drifting out to space.

—Glenn Ward Dresbach

Sea Shells

O SEA SHELL sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of ships and sails and barges;
O Sea Shell sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of scents and sounds and largess;
Sing far and low where the salt winds blow
And tell of the things the oceans know;
Sing clear and high of a midnight sky
Where great cloud-ships go sailing by—
O Sea Shell sing for I love the sea!

O Sea Shell sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of gulls and dunes and ledges;
O Sea Shell sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of love of the ocean's edges;
Sing o'er and o'er of the wild sea roar
In raging storms when rain clouds pour;
Sing low and clear for the harbor near
For the sailor home to love and cheer—
O Sea Shell sing for I love the sea!

—Annice Calland

Echoes

HAVE you seen the surf flaming in the moonlight?
Have you seen the fires gleaming
Over the water,
While the embers of our fire died away?
Have you listened to the whisper of the waters
Under the rhythmic booming of the sea?

Those were the fires of Carthage;
That was the surf on Ithaca;
Those were the whispers that Ulysses heard
Of siren-song.

Have you seen the dawn burning
From the top of the mountain?
Smashing the massed white cloud bank
And flooding the plainsland with gold?

That was the dawn that Hannibal
Flung on the fields of Italy!

Have you counted the stars?
Aldebaran and Pleiades,
Orion and the moons of Jupiter,
And all the last stars of the Milky Way?

Those were the stars the Three Men saw,
And one more.

What happened to the Star of Bethlehem?

—David P. Berenberg.

Mountain Road

FOLLOWING the trail's will,
Skirting round a boulder,
I came upon a gravel road
Across the hill's shoulder.

Rain had washed it maiden-smooth;
And—oh, but this was sweet!—
The only tracks I saw on it
Were of a rabbit's feet.

—*Belle Turnbull*

Jewelry

IHAVE talked to many things—
Foolishly, I will admit—
Talked to my hand and to the rings
That made a sudden art of it.

And to my hand I have said this:
“So, this quaintly contoured mold,
This poignant skin that sunlights kiss,
You must adorn with studded gold.”

And to my rings: “Scorning to lie
In ivory case on satin mesh,
You find your meaning's fullest cry
In this relation to thin flesh.”

My Hands

ONCE my hands were glad and warm,
Yet placid in their pride,
With never a feeling for the storm
Tearing the world outside.

Now when I hear the deep winds blow
My hands will quickly fold,
And lock themselves together—so,
As though they fear the cold.

Midnight

ONCE I did a senseless thing:
I raised my arm into the night;
Just then a moon shone in to fling
My arm into a marbled light.
It seemed not mine but something old
And dead as though it had been there,
Reaching terribly into the cold
Since arms were arms and air was air.

I watched it as it hung there, lit
Like another moon to chasten space,
Until I grew afraid of it
And pulled it back into its place.

—*Annie Higgins*

So Fair a Sorrow

THREE is so fair a sorrow at my heart
So searching bright and exquisite a pain—
It flashes like a star through midnight spaces
A thousand mirrors give it back again!

Such my proud spirit's wistful exultation
From vaunting joy it keeps its dream apart;
A mellow cadence sings within my silence—
There is so fair a sorrow at my heart!

—*Anna Karfunkle*

Song

B Y Maytime stars that hover
Above the hills, and show
How plums and pear blooms cover
The orchards as with snow;

By breezes from the valley
Where bonfires lift and sway,
And singing voices dally
To steal one's heart away;

By these I charge you straitly,
Oh time that still is hid,
Betray me not so greatly
As Long Ago once did.

Keep all the charming glimmer,
Keep spring and me apart;
If one be dull, the dimmer
The pang within the heart.

—Allan Davis

Termination

OH, night will find us as it has all children,
Grown over-weary and of life too sore;
We shall be too fed of truth to want then
The lollypops of dreams, or hunger for
The saccharined entreaties of the flesh;
No outward-swinging door will call our feet,

Nor any meadow, morning-kissed and fresh;
Night's door will close and rust fast when we meet.
Nor shall we care if evening's casement closes
On ways too-overgrown and shadow-cast,
We who, as children, gathered all life's roses
Will strew them down the gardens of the past,
Save one we plucked together on a hill—
And night will strew its petals where it will.

—Howard McKinley Corning

Sentimental History

RESISTLESS time, they said, would break
And temper the aloof and frigid
Stillness she had; and time would take
The pride too sure, the will too rigid.

The hard gray grinding of each day,
The fine attrition of each second,
Cut and carved and smoothed away
More than they had wished or reckoned,

Leaving the unsuspected bright
Core of her, gay with mocking pledges,
This quick and dazzling lance of light,
This burning blade with perilous edges.

Only the Bright Derision

THE hour that seemed a petal
With colors light and sure,
Was Time, a steel-strange metal
Where only scars endure.

At which the baffled, narrow
Lift of my thought must beat,
A small and blunted arrow
Falling in quick defeat.

Only the bright derision
Of your cold smile or word
Can cleave that stark division
Like an enchanted sword.

—Marjorie Meeker

Mistress Death

THERE being no one in this living town
With whom I may thus lovingly lie down,
I know a distant one, embracing whom
My pitiful self will easily forget
These all too disappointing other ones
And she is surely waiting for me. Yet
Her unelastic bone-encircled womb
Barren of all but light and air, suggests
No possibility of fair-haired sons;
All her white nakedness may be displayed
Without exciting me; she has no breasts,
And what should be my warmly moving mesh
Is a cold girdle, for her limbs are made
Without the soft sweet element of flesh.

Eloi, Eloi

I USED to think that hanging on a cross
Meant death of an easy, gentle-Jesus sort:
Three hours of anguish,—after all, how short!
A gradual dissolution, with no loss
Of that sad dignity which martyrs need
To consummate a solemn sacrifice,
And thieves and thorns and soldiers playing dice
And spear wounds that appropriately bleed
Make a viaticum that must afford
Much satisfaction for a mournful Lord
Passing on His way to Paradise.

I didn't know. That was before I knew.

And here I am now, crucified on you
Where every one can see me, white and sick,
A sorry spectacle before the town.

A man on a cross, I find, attempts to kick
In wretched desperate agony, that fails
Against the resolute restraint of nails.

Inexorably nailed to you, I cry
Aloud in darkness, feebly wonder why
My Mother cannot help me, standing by

And I know I am God's own Son. But I can't get down.

—*Rolfe Humphries*

Sonnet

LOOK in my face and search there as you will,
Nothing will meet your question but a lad
That knows no more of life than to be glad,
And whistle tunes, and lie upon a hill;
A clear-eyed child that should he see or touch
A lovely thing, will lift to you a smile,
And you will take his hand a little while,
Not knowing why, nor caring very much.

You have not heard how on a certain day
A lonely centaur, parching for a drink,
Unearthed a spring and stooping to the brink
Screamed out to see the thing he could not say;
And how from that time forth he runs his course
In madness, from the hoof-beats of a horse.

—*Lindley Williams Hubbell*

Initiate

I WILL draw back from the brink
Of tears; I will not drink.
My flying feet will halt,
My hurrying hands will shrink
From skimming its film of salt,
From tearing the thin tissue,
The membrane, from the quick
Of the bitter-sweet shallow.
I will not hold or hallow
This moment, or give it issue.
My hands clutch back to the thick
Assurance of my breast—
I will tighten my body to rest.
How came I here, a stranger,
Close to the spring of danger?

Now were my figure cast—
My backward-moving feet
Poised in a slow retreat—
It would be as the first
Woman or the last,
Either no woman's daughter
Or without a child,
Who could not know her thirst
Until she came to water,
And found it salt-defiled.
The metals for the casting
To hold me in this rigid
Wonder should be as frigid
As ice, and no more lasting

Now I am unconfused—
No body can be so bruised
By water as by waste
Which taints the thing unused.
I start in glorious haste
To touch the quick, to taste—
Now, with a shining rush
Through the dark underbrush.

—*Louise Townsend Nicholl*

Ghoul

I SAW the half moon on his back,
The Great Bow of the stars go slack;
The houses like a fever chart
Shook with the beating of my heart
As I saw Sagittarius go
Slack, and the string slip from his bow:
Gold slid dripping; it went thus
Loosened and illustrious;
Exaggerated pines whose brittle
Branches burned with frosty spittle
Scratched gaps in the blue
Lucidity and let stars through,
Till it seemed the stars somehow
Hissed and crackled at each bough;
Shadows with slow sullen hair
Huddled on the breathing stair
Private to the moon and there
Roused the reminiscent dead
Chilled, uneasy, visited
Night crouched cougar-wise,
A huge cat rocking behind his eyes.

—*Joseph Auslander*

Gypsy

ALL day beneath her tent of red and yellow,
Nesting in green and red and yellow petticoats
She sits, unravelling knotted wrinkles in the palms
Of clumsy lovers.

All day beneath her tent of red and yellow
She mumbles miracles of love into their palms
Who would cry out with fear of love if they could read
Her palms aright.

—*Vernon Patterson*

To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon

PICKANINNY, black child, in the cabin door,
Munch your gold persimmon to the soft sweet core!
Comes another sun roll, you shall wake to see
Rust upon the branches of your green gold tree.

Blight will put its cold mouth to each tingling shoot,
Drain the yellow sunshine from the warm ripe fruit;
You may keep as barter for the noons of now
Sound of winter surf wind breaking in a bough.

Hard behind the marshes where the red suns reel,
Three gray fates sit nodding at the wheel;
Never tarry, black child—subtly runs the mould;
Few the limbs that lavish pickaninny gold.

—*Mildred Plew Merryman*

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INDEX, Numbers 25-36

March 1923—February 1924

POEMS

<i>After Plenty</i> , Bernard Raymond.....	July	<i>Buona-Sera</i> , Giuseppe Cautela.....	November
<i>Akins, Zoe, A Night</i> , London.....	September	<i>Burgess, Robert Louis, Girls</i>	May
<i>Alling, Kenneth Slade, To One Who Asked</i>	May	<i>But Like Mad Builders</i> , Marjorie Meeker.....	December
<i>The Bird</i>	July	<i>Bynner, Witter</i> (with Kiang Kang-hu), <i>Chinese Translations</i>	October
<i>To a Maryland Yellow-Throat</i>	July	<i>Calland, Annice, Sea Shells</i>	February
<i>The Owl</i>	September	<i>Cautela, Giuseppe, Buona-Sera</i>	November
<i>Crickets</i>	October	<i>Good-bye</i>	November
<i>Three Women at Low Tide</i>	November	<i>Charms For Six</i> , Elizabeth J. Coatsworth....	March
<i>Boast</i>	November	<i>Child Much Loved of Poets, A</i> , Jeanne d' Orge	May
<i>Low Tide</i>	November	<i>Chinese Translations</i> , Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu	October
<i>Pater</i>	January	<i>Choice, The</i> , Elisabeth Thomas.....	January
<i>Ambition</i> , Elizabeth Stewart Metzger.....	November	<i>Cleopatra As Mary Garden: The Cydnus, Arnaud de Ventadour</i>	May
<i>Answers</i> , Marie Emilie Gilchrist.....	December	<i>Coatsworth, Elizabeth J., Charms For Six</i>	March
<i>Apprentice</i> , Maud Elfrid Uschold.....	December	<i>Cobbler's Daughter, The</i> , Stirling Bowen.....	December
<i>Auslander, Joseph, Dead Love</i>	June	<i>Cobwebbed Trapeze Performer</i> , Prescott Hoard	
<i>Jezebel</i>	June	<i>Colum, Padraic, Kerry Nursing Song</i>	June
<i>Moon Cattle</i>	June	<i>Plovers</i>	January
<i>Il Magnopoco</i>	August	<i>Cook, Harold Lewis, Tension</i>	July
<i>I Went Out Alone</i>	September	<i>Corning, Howard McKinley, Termination</i>	February
<i>Ghoul</i>	February	<i>Cosmic Scandal</i> , John Macy.....	April
<i>Autumn Horsemen, The</i> , John Gould Fletcher.....	July	<i>Cottage in the Catskills, A</i> , Charles Divine.....	January
<i>Beata Beatrice</i> , Arnault de Ventadour.....	May	<i>Country Rhymes</i> , Orrick Johns.....	October
<i>Berenberg, David P., Echoes</i>	February	<i>Couplets in Criticism</i> , John Macy.....	May
<i>Bird, The</i> , Kenneth Slade Alling.....	July	<i>Crool, Peter, Narcissus, A Foreground</i>	March
<i>Boast, Kenneth Slade Alling</i>	November	<i>Curtis, Christine Turner, Penitent</i>	January
<i>Bogan, Louise, The Stones</i>	June		
<i>Trio</i>	June		
<i>Bowdoin, Peter, "Love in Whose Name"</i>	May		
<i>Bowen, Stirling, The Milkman's Boy</i>	December		
<i>The Cobbler's Daughter</i>	December		
<i>Brook Under Ice, The</i> , Glenn Ward Dresbach	December		

INDEX—Continued

<i>Dames of Old Waggery</i> , Arnault de Ventadour	May
Daniels, Earl, <i>Hysteria</i>	March
<i>"If I May Choose My Dream"</i>	March
<i>On My Table, A Moth</i>	March
Davis, Allan, <i>Song</i>	February
de Ventadour, Arnault, <i>Beata Beatrice</i>	May
<i>Cleopatra as Mary Garden: The Cydnus</i>	May
<i>Dames of Old Waggery</i>	May
<i>Dona Ana at the Judgment</i>	May
<i>Phaedra Pasiphacia</i>	May
Dead Leaves, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	November
Dead Love, Joseph Auslander.....	June
Desert Legend, Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	February
Divine, Charles, <i>A Cottage in the Catskills</i>	January
<i>Sea Gulls</i>	January
Dona Ana at the Judgment, Arnault de Ventadour	May
d'Orge, Jeanne, <i>A Child Much Loved of Poets</i>	May
<i>Interiors</i>	May
<i>The Sink</i>	May
Dream Fear, Ruth Lechlitner.....	December
Dresbach, Glenn Ward, <i>Brook Under Ice, The</i>	January
<i>Empty Corral</i>	February
<i>Desert Legend</i>	February
Echoes, David P. Berenberg.....	February
Eloi, Eloi, Rolfe Humphries.....	February
Empty Corral, Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	February
Enchanter's Handmaiden, Elinor Wylie.....	October
Escape, Raymond Holden.....	June
Eicher, The, Benjamin Rosenbaum.....	June
Evans, Abbie Huston, <i>The Spread Table</i>	July
<i>The Light on the Rock</i>	July
<i>The Vine</i>	November
<i>Will He Give Him a Stone</i>	November
Evans, Ernestine, <i>Winter Woods</i>	October
Fall, Mark Van Doren.....	October
First Spring, Nicholas Kopeloff.....	June
First Voyage, Harold Vinal.....	August
Flanagan, W. L., <i>The Rabbit Hunt</i>	November
Fletcher, John Gould, <i>The Autumn Horsemen</i>	July
Fletcher, Myla, <i>Tell Us, Charon!</i>	April
<i>Turns</i>	May
Floral Decorations for Bananas, Wallace Stevens	April
Formula, Marie Emilie Gilchrist.....	December
For a Fan, Hilary Hollister.....	May
Fraser, Abbott, <i>A Picture of Indian Summer</i>	December
Frost, Robert, <i>In a Disused Graveyard</i>	August
<i>The Kitchen Chimney</i>	August
<i>Gathering Leaves</i>	August
Gathering Leaves, Robert Frost.....	August
Ghoul, Joseph Auslander.....	February
Gilchrist, Helen Ives, <i>Old Andrew</i>	August
<i>Three Trees</i>	September
Gilchrist, Marie Emilie, <i>Answers</i>	December
Influence	December
The Illusionist	December
Formula	December
<i>Girls</i> , Robert Louis Burgess.....	May
<i>Good-bye, Giuseppe Cautela</i>	November
<i>Grotesque</i> , David Morton.....	September
<i>Group</i> , Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	November
<i>Gypsy</i> , Vernon Patterson.....	February
Hall, Carolyn, <i>In an Empty Church</i>	June
<i>Two Songs</i>	November
Hall, Hazel, <i>Rain</i>	August
Haste, Gwendolen, <i>Last Days of the Scout</i>	September
Hawaiian Hero, Genevieve Taggard.....	March
Hellman, Rhoda, <i>Puddle</i>	May
Higgins, Annie, <i>My Hands Jewelry</i>	February
Hill, Frank Ernest, <i>Midnight Tenement</i>	May
Hoard, Prescott, <i>Cobwebbed Trapeze Performer</i>	June
Holden, Raymond, <i>Escape</i>	June
<i>To Nine Who Vanished Long Ago</i>	June
<i>Though Almost Anything</i>	June
<i>The Lost Legend</i>	August
How One Walked in Sorrow, David Morton.....	July
Hollister, Hilary, <i>For a Fan</i>	May
How the Constable Carried the Pot Across the Public Square, Wallace Stevens.....	April
Hoyt, H. Underwood, <i>An Unprejudiced Mind</i>	July
<i>More Lovelier Than a Mountainside</i>	July
<i>Never a Fox</i>	September
Hubbell, Lindley Williams, <i>To All Dead Women</i>	August
<i>Sonnet</i>	February
Humming Bird, The, Beatrice Ravenel.....	September
Humphries, Rolfe, Eloi, Eloi	February
<i>Mistress Death</i>	February
Hysteria, Earl Daniels	March
I Went Out Alone, Joseph Auslander.....	September
Ice Agony, Louise Townsend Nicholl	September
<i>"If I May Choose My Dream," Earl Daniels</i>	March
Il Magnopoco, Joseph Auslander	August
Illusionist, The, Marie Emilie Gilchrist	December
In a Disused Graveyard, Robert Frost	August
In a Theatre, John Masefield	June
In an Empty Church, Carolyn Hall	June
In December, Elisabeth Thomas	January
In the Esplanade of the Invalides, George O'Neil	May
Inarticulate, Mark Van Doren	October
Influence, Marie Emilie Gilchrist	December
Initiate, Louise Townsend Nicholl	February
Interiors, Jeanne d'Orge	May
Jezebel, Joseph Auslander	June
Jewelry, Annie Higgins	February
Johns, Orrick, <i>Country Rhymes</i>	October
<i>To a Brother</i>	October
<i>Poet and Planter</i>	October
Juggernaut, Leonora Speyer	March
Kerry Nursing Song, Padraig Colum	August
Kiang Kang-hu—see Witter Bynner	
King in Egypt, A, David Morton	September

INDEX—Continued

<i>Kitchen Chimney, The</i> , Robert Frost.....	August	<i>Dead Leaves</i>	November
<i>Kopeloff, Nicholas, First Spring</i>	June	<i>Madison Square</i>	November
<i>Lace Shroud</i> , Winifred Welles.....	November	<i>Initiate</i>	February
<i>Last Days of the Scout</i> , Gwendolen Haste.....	September	<i>Night, London, A</i> , Zoe Akins.....	September
<i>Lean, Wade Oliver</i>	November	<i>Numbers</i> , John Macy.....	April
<i>Leaves, Maud Elfrid Uschold</i>	December		
<i>Lechlitter, Ruth, Dream Fear</i>	December		
<i>Presence</i>	December		
<i>Legend, Raymond Holden</i>	October	<i>O Be Not Silent</i> , George O'Neil.....	July
<i>Lewis, May, Onlookers</i>	January	<i>O'Neil, George, In the Esplanade of the Invalides</i>	May
<i>Light on the Rock, The</i> , Abbie Huston Evans		<i>Refuge</i>	May
<i>Lindsey, Therese, Lost</i>	July	<i>Song of the Barren Year</i>	May
<i>Lost, Therese Lindsey</i>	January	<i>Morning</i>	July
<i>Lost, The, Raymond Holden</i>	August	<i>O Be Not Silent</i>	July
<i>Low Tide, Kenneth Slade Alling</i>	November	<i>On the Bow of a Ship</i>	August
<i>"Love in Whose Name," Peter Bowdoin</i>	May	<i>Oh, Let the Summer Mould You</i> , Lucy Hale	
<i>Mackall, Virginia Woods, Medicine</i>	March	<i>Sturges</i>	August
<i>Many Waters</i>	June	<i>Old Andrew</i> , Helen Ives Gilchrist.....	August
<i>Struck</i>	August	<i>Oliver, Wade, Lean</i>	November
<i>Macy, John, Cosmic Scandal</i>	April	<i>On My Table, A Moth</i> , Earl Daniels.....	March
<i>Numbers</i>	April	<i>On the Bow of a Ship</i> , George O'Neil.....	August
<i>Passage</i>	April	<i>OnLookers</i> , May Lewis.....	January
<i>The Poet</i>	April	<i>Only the Bright Derision</i> , Marjorie Meeker.....	February
<i>Vigil</i>	April	<i>Owl, The</i> , Kenneth Slade Alling.....	September
<i>Wells?</i>	April		
<i>Couplets in Criticism</i>	May	<i>Passage</i> , John Macy.....	April
<i>Madison Square</i> , Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	November	<i>Pater, Kenneth Slade Alling</i>	January
<i>Many Waters</i> , Virginia Woods Mackall.....	June	<i>Patterson, Vernon, Gypsy</i>	February
<i>Masefield, John, In a Theatre</i>	June	<i>Penitent</i> , Christine Turner Curtis.....	January
<i>Mayer, Edwin Justus, Retreat</i>	March	<i>Percy, William Alexander, Rain Patter</i>	December
<i>Medicine</i> , Virginia Woods Mackall.....	March	<i>Phaedra Pasiphaea</i> , Arnault de Ventadour.....	May
<i>Merryman, Mildred Plew, That Year</i>	December	<i>Picture of Indian Summer, A</i> , Abbott Fraser	
<i>To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon</i>	February		
<i>Metzger, Elizabeth Stewart, Ambition</i>	November	<i>Pigeon, Mark Van Doren</i>	January
<i>Meeker, Marjorie, But Like Mad Builders</i>	December	<i>Plovers</i> , Padraig Colum.....	January
<i>Walls</i>	December	<i>Poet and Planter</i> , Orrick Johns.....	October
<i>Only the Bright Derision</i>	February	<i>Poet, The</i> , John Macy.....	April
<i>Sentimental History</i>	February	<i>Porter, Katherine Anne, Two Songs from Mexico</i>	January
<i>Midnight, Annie Higgins</i>	February	<i>Presence, Ruth Lechlitter</i>	December
<i>Midnight Tenement</i> , Frank Ernest Hill.....	May	<i>Proud Song, A</i> , Marguerite Wilkinson.....	January
<i>Milkman's Boy, The</i> , Stirling Bowen.....	December	<i>Puddle, Rhoda Hellman</i>	May
<i>Miller, Mary B., Rain-Drenched</i>	October		
<i>Mistress Death, Rolfe Humphries</i>	February		
<i>Moon Cattle, Joseph Auslander</i>	June		
<i>More Lovely Than a Mountainside, H. Underwood Hoyt</i>	July		
<i>Morning, George O'Neil</i>	July		
<i>Morton, David, How One Walked in Sorrow</i>	July		
<i>Grotesque</i>	September		
<i>A King in Egypt</i>	September		
<i>Scars</i>	January		
<i>Mountain Road, Belle Turnbull</i>	February		
<i>My Hands, Annie Higgins</i>	February		
<i>Narcissus—A Foreground</i> , Peter Crook.....	March		
<i>Never a Fox, H. Underwood Hoyt</i>	September		
<i>New England Verses</i> , Wallace Stevens.....	April		
<i>Nicholl, Louise Townsend, Wooden Spades</i>	September		
<i>Icy Agony</i>	September		
<i>Black Mist</i>	September		
<i>Group</i>	November		

INDEX—Continued

<i>Sentimental History</i> , Marjorie Meeker.....	February	Uschold, Maud Elfrid, <i>Sorrow</i>	December
<i>Shape of the Coroner, The</i> , Wallace Stevens....	May	<i>Apprentice</i>	December
<i>Shore, Elisabeth Thomas</i>	November	<i>Leaves</i>	December
<i>Sink, The, Jeanne d'Orge</i>	May		
<i>Song, Allan Davis</i>	February		
<i>Song of the Barren Year, George O'Neil</i>	May		
<i>Sonnet, Lindley Williams Hubbell</i>	February		
<i>Sorrow, Maud Elfrid Uschold</i>	December		
<i>Speyer, Leonora, Juggernaut</i>	March		
<i>Rust, Dust, Fountain Water</i>	April		
<i>Two Moon Whims</i>	April		
<i>Spread Table, The</i> , Abbie Huston Evans.....	July		
<i>Spring Moss, Beatrice Ravenel</i>	September		
<i>Stevens, Wallace, Floral Decorations for Bananas</i>	April		
<i>How the Constable Carried the Pot Across the Public Square</i>	April		
<i>New England Verses</i>	April		
<i>The Shape of the Coroner</i>	May		
<i>Stones, The, Louise Bogan</i>	June		
<i>Stork, Charles Wharton, To One Who Has Suffered</i>	December		
<i>Struck, Virginia Woods Mackall</i>	August		
<i>Sturges, Lucy Hale, Oh, Let the Summer Mould You</i>	August		
<i>Taggard, Genevieve, Hawaiian Hero</i>	March		
<i>Teacher, The, Mary Armantine Ward</i>	January		
<i>Tell Us, Charon!</i> , Myla Fletcher.....	April		
<i>Tension, Harold Lewis Cook</i>	July		
<i>Termination, Howard McKinley Corning</i>	February		
<i>That Year, Mildred Plew Merryman</i>	December		
<i>Thayer, Harriet Maxon, A Very Old Lady</i>	March		
<i>Three Women at Low Tide, Kenneth Slade Alling</i>	November		
<i>Thomas, Elisabeth, Shore</i>	November		
<i>The Choice</i>	January		
<i>In December</i>	January		
<i>Though Almost Anything, Raymond Holden</i>	June		
<i>Though We Protest, Eda Lou Walton</i>	December		
<i>Three Trees, Helen Ives Gilchrist</i>	September		
<i>To a Brother, Orrick Johns</i>	October		
<i>To a Maryland Yellow-Throat, Kenneth Slade Alling</i>	July		
<i>To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon, Mildred Plew Merryman</i>	February		
<i>To All Dead Women, Lindley Williams Hubbell</i>	August		
<i>To Nine Who Vanished Long Ago, Raymond Holden</i>	June		
<i>To One Who Asked, Kenneth Slade Alling</i>	May		
<i>To One Who Has Suffered, Charles Wharton Stork</i>	December		
<i>To the Younger Set, Margaret Widdemer</i> ..	January		
<i>Tracks, Harold Vinal</i>	November		
<i>Trio, Louise Bogan</i>	June		
<i>Two Moon Whims, Leonora Speyer</i>	April		
<i>Two Songs, Carolyn Hall</i>	November		
<i>Two Songs From Mexico, Katherine Anne Porter</i>	January		
<i>Turnbull, Belle, Mountain Road</i>	February		
<i>Turns, Myla Fletcher</i>	May		
<i>Unprejudiced Mind, An, H. Underwood Hoyt</i>	July		

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NOTE

Winifred Welles has resigned from *The Measure*. Rolfe Humphries, formerly of California and now teaching in a boys' school in New York, has been elected to the editorial board. He will be the active editor for the spring months, March, April and May, with Genevieve Taggard as his assistant.

ANOTHER POETRY PRIZE

The Garden Magazine is offering a prize of \$50 for "a new and original poem on the Dahlia," not exceeding six stanzas in length. Verse submitted must be "of joyous mood in any lyric form." Contestants, who may submit any number of entries with their name and address on each, must send their contributions to the Dahlia Poem Contest, care of Editors of The Garden Magazine, Garden City, N. Y., before October 1, 1924.

CONTRIBUTORS

GLENN WARD DRESBACH's new book, *The Enchanted Mesa*, will be brought out by Holt in the spring.

ANNICE CALLAND writes from Port au Prince, Haiti.

BELLE TURNBULL who has published some poetry is interested in interpreting the moods of Colorado. She lives in Colorado Springs.

ANNA KARFUNKLE is a native New Yorker and is connected with a New York studio. Her poems have appeared in a number of magazines.

ALLAN DAVIS was born in Pittsburgh and graduated from Harvard in 1907 where he was an editor of the Harvard Monthly. He is a lawyer and is the author of several books.

HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING is a young writer in Portland, Ore.

VERNON PATTERSON sent his *Gypsy* from Berkeley, Calif.

Of the other familiar poets there is no particular news.

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

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